

Need for Change: Last Chance for Climate Diplomacy?





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Whether we like it or not, climate change will define the future of international affairs. It will alter the way we live, work, trade – and do diplomacy. The German public is mostly worried about extreme weather events as consequences of climate change (70 per cent) but also about conflicts and wars (32 per cent). Accordingly, more and more foreign policy makers in Germany, like others around the globe, acknowledge climate change as a threat multiplier aggravating existing instabilities. But beyond security concerns, the effects of climate change will upend many more tenets of our nations’ foreign policies.

To name a few, pursuing international mitigation and adaptation strategies will force states to rethink bilateral relations, to update their development cooperation and to adapt their national economies, including supply chains and trade relationships. The geopolitical shifts caused by an increasing race for resources and by new technologies are only beginning to become apparent. To keep pace with these developments, profound change is needed – domestically and in foreign policy. Some of the transformations will be painful, but they also offer chances to be seized. For instance, the need to achieve carbon neutrality provides a historic opportunity to modernize national economies in line with ecological and digital demands. Franziska Brantner points out how Germany could become the green forerunner that the majority of Germans already believe it is. And Sheikh Hasina provides some best practices for climate adaptation from Bangladesh.

Tackling the consequences of a heating planet is a task for the international community. And, even though multilateral advances can be tedious, as previous negotiations at the UN Climate Change Conference have shown, Patricia Espinosa traces why they are nonetheless indispensable to find common answers to the climate crisis. Dhanasree Jayaram, in contrast, has good arguments for more flexible coalitions of the willing. Regardless of format, as an issue that affects all of humanity, confronting climate change bears the potential to reunite actors in less usual coalitions. With a nod to Russia, Michael Mann reminds us that international cooperation on existential issues like climate change is possible, as seen in the Arctic.

The deteriorating climate affects politics at all levels – domestically and internationally. And it is not only the young generation that has understood that there is a dire need for change to address the related challenges. How could international climate diplomacy adapt and what about the chances of this transformation? Find out on the following pages.

